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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

MILITARY INCAPACITY,

AND

WHAT IT COSTS THE COUNTRY.

By CHARLES ELLET, Jr.,

CIVIL ENGINEER.

Military Incapacity has caused the loss of one campaign: Shall we allow it to cause the loss of another?

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NOTE.

The writer is perfectly aware that his little pamphlet on the "Army of the Potomac and its Mismanagement," was a very unpopular and unwelcome exposition of a fatal truth. But he did not write, and does not now write for popularity. He is in pursuit of no man's or party's favor or patronage.

Our country is sinking, not beneath the strength of the rebellion, but under the heavier hand of military incapacity. Foreign governments begin to interfere in American affairs; to enforce their own wills on a neighboring Republic, and to dictate their wishes to us. We are fast losing our proud position; and he who would pause to think of his own popularity in such an hour of peril, would be unworthy of the loftiest privilege that a man, in this age, can enjoy—the right to assert his claim to be a citizen of the free American Republic.

The writer offers his thanks to all those who have given him assurances of their appreciation of his previous feeble effort to uphold the honor of the flag by the only means left open to his exertions—teaching him, as their kind letters do, that the patriotism of his country *is not dead*, though that of our great and gallant Army has been, and is still, most cruelly stifled.

Georgetown, D. C., *February* 6, 1862.

MILITARY INCAPACITY.

GEORGETOWN, D. C.,
February 6, 1862.

The Memorial of a loyal citizen to the Congress of the United States, respectfully represents: That

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY at the head of our Army that has enabled a rebellious population of four or five millions of people, without a recognized government, or naval power, or foreign commerce, or pretended skill in the arts, to set at defiance the entire military and naval resources of a brave, enterprising, and patriotic population of more than twenty millions of freemen.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that allowed four months of summer and autumnal weather to pass by unimproved, and now announces the programme of an offensive campaign, with a deteorating army, in mid-winter.

It was MILITARY INCAPACITY that kept our impatient troops idle in camp, from August until January, at a cost of over two millions of dollars a day, and thus expended, in wanton inactivity and vain parades, more than *three hundred millions of the public money.*

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that has afforded the rebels the means of penetrating the puerile plan of an impossible *simultaneous advance* along an extended front of five or six thousand miles, running through different climates and varying weather, and given them time to fortify themselves on every line we have chosen for our approach.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that has dispatched isolated and unsupported expeditions to the Southern coasts, and there exposed them, by reckless distribution, in small commands, to the imminent danger of being cut off, as soon as they set foot on the main, by the idle militia and half-combatants whom the rebels have left at home; while their organized "Confederate Army" *blockades some three hundred thousand of our brave men here on the Potomac.*

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY at headquarters that directed BURNSIDE to the coast of North Carolina, there to fritter away his small force in harrassing a sea-board where probably half the people would have proved themselves to be loyal if they had been properly and promptly supported; while the Port Royal expedition, hemmed in by the rebels, is wasting away, and unable to move forward for want of the very reinforcements which are thus sacrificed by ignorance on the sand banks of Pamlico Sound.

It was MILITARY INCAPACITY which brought nearly all the available troops in the country here to Washington, and kept them six months in their camps, while the enemy seized and fortified the bluffs of the Mississippi, devastated Missouri, invaded Kentucky, and immolated the loyal men of East Tennessee with impunity.

It was MILITARY INCAPACITY which, clothed with the absolute command of two or three hundred thousand brave and willing men, allowed the Potomac to be blockaded by land-batteries, while mere civilians sought in vain to induce the pre-occupation of the very positions where those batteries were established.*

It was MILITARY INCAPACITY at head-quarters which permitted the rebel General JACKSON, with ten or twelve thousand men, to drive all our troops out of Virginia to the north side of the Upper Potomac, and shell the river towns in Maryland, and continue the work of robbery and destruction along the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, in the very presence of countless thousands of brave men, ready to tear their hearts out for very shame, without an attempt to cut him off.

It was MILITARY INCAPACITY which withdrew ROSECRANS and his command from the valley of the Great Kanawha, and ordered them into winter quarters, in the fine weather of Autumn—and which now commands their return in mid-winter, when the roads on which they ought to march are nearly or quite impassable.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that seeks to substitute the dead weight of sleeping men for strategical combinations, rapid marches, unlooked-for surprises and dashing charges, and that

* The writer refers only to his own personal efforts to prevent this shameful surrender.

marshal inspiration which of itself leads to confidence, victory and fame.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY which deprives us of the immense advantages we might derive from our superior means of railroad and river navigation on and north of the Ohio and Potomac — from the Chesapeake Bay to the Mississippi River—to appreciate and use the facilities this superior transportation affords for deceiving the enemy as to the immediate object of our attack; to concentrate our troops and launch them on the positions or in the State where it is the tention to strike a quick and crushing blow—and even to deliver the blow before the rebels can determine the point where it is to fall.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that renders our commanding General unable to estimate the value of TIME in war, and which induced him to let his soldiers sleep through all the bright sunlight of Autumn, while Victory, and the Tutelary Protectors of the Union, grieving over a proud and prosperous nation's danger, were beckoning him on to his glorious and neglected work, from every mountain-top of Western Virginia.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY which has brought one of the richest countries on earth to the verge of bankruptcy in six months.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY which has made loyal people doubtful, thoughtful people anxious, and timid people hopeless of ultimate success.

It was MILITARY INCAPACITY that exposed the nation to a foreign menace, and dictated instantaneous compliance with an insolent demand, supported by an ostentatious display of military and naval *force.*

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that has already excited the contempt of foreign governments, and which now subjects the country to the danger of foreign intervention.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY that has tamed and degraded this proud people, and compelled every patriot, jealous of his country's honor, to hang his head for shame.

It is MILITARY INCAPACITY which now talks of plunging six or seven hundred thousand men on the prepared lines of the enemy, in order to accomplish in mid-winter, and by *bloody butchery*, the work which might have been done in the autumn by *intelligent strategy.*

Let our patriotic people not be misled by vain promises and yet vainer hopes. The rebellion is not, as it is represented in anonymous publications from the headquarters of the army to be, on the eve of its final overthrow.* Ignorance and puerile imbecility cannot overthrow it. Victories upon victories in Kentucky and on the Mississippi, though purchased by torrents of the dearest blood of the WEST, will leave it still in full vigor, in a more contracted field, perhaps,—though even that is doubtful—but more concentrated and in undiminished strength.

This rebellion must be essentially crushed, if at all, quickly; and it must receive its death blow *in Virginia*, where the military strength of its upholders is chiefly concentrated. It must be broken down by *the capture*, or by the irretrievable defeat of the rebel army of Manassas. And, since the possession of the south bank of the Potomac was voluntarily surrendered to the enemy by General MCCLELLAN—ceding to them the most convenient sites they could obtain for planting the batteries with which they blockade the Potomac, and protect their right flank—the advance of our armies must be mainly upon their left flank and rear, and by the way of Western Virginia.

I know the gallantry of our troops, the spirit of their officers, the patriotism of all. I know, too, the immensity of our armies, and the magnificence of their equipments, and something, I trust, of what men are capable of doing. But with all our extravagant expenditures, and boundless national energy, and multiplied resources, we have not yet taken the first and indispensible step towards making these vast prepa-

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* "The folds of the giant constrictor are now tightening around the rebellion, and *the coming month*,, (February,) *will see it crushed out completely and forever*.."

The editor of the NEW YORK TIMES, in quoting this promise, and submitting the letter containing it to the country, accompanies it by the assurance that it was "written by a person *who speaks from the highest possible authority*."

This letter was dated at WASHINGTON, *January* 12, and will be found in the *New York Times of January* 15.

Other communications, obviously from the same source, and holding out the same promise, appeared about the same time, and were accepted by the press and the public as also of the highest authority.

rations available for good—either the removal of an incompetent General from the head of the army, with the appointment of an intelligent and capable man in his place—or the distribution of the vast military power of the country under a sufficient number of independent Commanders,—whose martial instincts will not be trammelled by official pretention and jealousy.

As we now act—tolerating incapacity at the very head of the volunteer force called out for the defense of the country's honor and life—we not only do wrong to ourselves and our posterity, but deep wrong to those noble INSTITUTIONS, of which we are the appointed guardians—and of which, it is to be feared, we are ourselves scarcely yet worthy,—by holding them up to the eyes of mankind as the true parent of our present imbecility. But, in the name of Humanity, let us show that it is not those institutions, but only the individual who, for a brief period, was commissioned to act as the military Agent of the nation, which those institutions have rendered happy and prosperous beyond example, that is at fault.

In a moment of alarm we placed a stranger at the head of the National Army, who had received an elementary military education, but on whom nature had not bestowed those rare qualities of heart and brain which constitute the real General—the capacity not merely to know when to stand still, which every imbecile can affect, but the higher and rarer gift to be able to see *when*, *where* and *how* to strike, when the opportunity of dealing a death blow is presented.

But the accidental appointment of an inefficient General is not a misfortune peculiar to Republican Institutions. History bears witness that no form of Government has yet afforded a protection against that calamity. It will be long before England forgets the fate of her expedition under the scion of a noble house—the earl of CHATHAM; and we all recollect that France herself,—of which the very government is but a military organization—only six years ago was forced to withdraw her favorite General from his command before the parapets of Sebastobol, in the midst of the most memorable seige which the world's history has recorded—and to substitute another in his place in the very heat of the battle.

Our own *Institutions* furnish a prompt remedy for the na-

tion's and the army's paralysis; and a fair opportunity is now afforded to the new Secretary of War, to vindicate by his treatment of this fatal malady, his claim to the praises which his friends bestow on him, and which the country has already accepted as legitimate, and which no one more than I myself, will rejoice to find are well merited.

A country discovers its real heroes in the actual conflict of arms—just as the sparks of fire, latent in the flint, are made visible by the shock of the steel hammer.

It is war, earnest and real war, and not parades or reviews, which alone can draw out a nation's spirit and its real MEN. National calamities, of which, alas, we seem to be destined soon, after long exemption from this sad fate of society, to have our full share—are the labor-throes which can alone give birth to the heroes of a struggling people.

Let us not rest delusive hopes on the mere valor and strength of our patriotic army. An army cannot be so strong that a rash or ignorant Commander, clothed with absolute power, may not destroy it; just as a nation can never become so great, or so secure, that weak or corrupt rulers may not prostrate it in the dust.

The incapacity of General McCLELLAN for military command has already cost the country the temporary sacrifice of its national fame for spirit, courage and enterprise. It is about to cost rivulets of blood in enterprises in which no blood need have been spilt—to sacrifice in a needless winter's campaign, the future health and usefulness of tens of thousands of gallant men—in all probability, to involve the country in a desperate foreign war—to give to nations jealous of Republican prosperity and progress, just or at least seemingly just, cause for interference—and, if continued in his position, to leave this great, proud and vigorous people, torn, humiliated, and exhausted.

But, let the truth be spoken. These unfortunate results have been promoted by a large portion of that FREE PRESS, once the boasted bulwark of the nation's independence—which has not only failed in its high duty in this hour of the country's sorest trial and greatest peril, but has lent its concentrated aid, in obedience doubtless, often to a mistaken, but patriotic instinct, to palm this Incompetent, the author of so

much irreparable mischief, upon the credulous and deluded people, as a Hero.

The American whose sad duty it may hereafter be to write the truthful history of the last few months, in which it has been our shame to live, will be compelled to record that the temporary decadence of his country was coincident with the almost universal corruption of its once Free, but now submissive Press. That, when the Press, with many honorable exceptions, doubtless, was either intimidated, appalled, or subsidized, and quietly surrendered its great privilege of vindicating freedom of thought and honest expression, and accepted in its place the ignoble function of disseminating fulsome and disgusting praises of weak or corrupt place-holders—crouching down before the accidental dispensers of the public patronage, and bartering away the honor of upholding the noblest of institutions, involving the dearest hopes of mankind, for the favor of each new Secretary or his upstart favorites—it was then that from its pride of place, and, let us hope, for a brief season only, The Great Republic Fell.

MEMORANDA.

The Expeditions to the Southern Coasts.

I submit these objections to the Southern expeditions, of which the plans and destination were so long and so carefully concealed, but which seem now, at last, to be very fully devoloped.

They are all *so small* and feeble that they can only harass the immediate coasts, but cannot venture to march inland, without exposure to the imminent danger of being cut off by the rebels—and they must, therefore, remain essentially inactive, until they are driven away by the southern summer sun, or by the diseases which heat and exposure will induce.

They are, on the other hand, all *so large* that, in the event of a foreign war with any respectable naval power, they cannot be withdrawn.

In either case it is greatly to be apprehended that they will prove to be costly *failures;* and in the hypothesis of the occurrence of a foreign war before they are recalled, they will be totally *lost.*

The only remedy for this embarrassment—and one, let me suggest, which cannot be applied too soon—will be found in the prompt concentration of all these isolated commands at Port Royal; where, if properly handled, and in conjunction with an intelligent use of the idle Army of the Potomac, in Virginia, they can make a successful advance alternately on Charleston and Savannah.

Then, in the event of a foreign war, superadded to our own domestic troubles, these forces, thus concentrated, and supplied in good season with adequate means of inland transportation, will be able, if such a necessity should arise, to fight their way across South and North Carolina, into Western Virginia; or, across Georgia into East Tennessee —in both of which directions, should we then have a competent Commander-in-chief, they will find co-operating Union armies, and *their own advance will be on the enemy's rear.*

The present wide distribution of these scattered commands will serve to place them *all* in the power of the local militia, whenever they may attempt to land and march to the interior. The most available military base in the South, either in the event of, or apart from, the occurrence of a foreign war, is Port Royal; whence, by the aid of an adequate force under energetic command, we can advance upon and occupy the two chief harbors on the Southern Atlantic coast, and seize and hold the railroad systems of the most inveterate of the rebel communities.

Credit begins now to be claimed for General McClellan by those whose business it is to ring the changes of his chameleonic merits, that his stand-still policy is intended to restore the Union, by wearing out and disheartening the rebels. If that pretence were true, neither these hazardous and costly expeditions, nor an offensive army of seven hundred thousand men—which, together, are rapidly crushing the whole country down—were necessary or justifiable.

If our purpose is only to blockade by land and sea—and stand patiently on the defensive—we neither need a large army nor maritime expeditions to the southern seaboard. If our purpose is to put down this rebellion by the strong hand, the army should be used with courage, energy and skill.

STEAM RAMS.

It is not generally known that the rebels now have *five steam rams* nearly ready for use. Of these five, two are on the Lower Mississippi, two are at Mobile, and one at Norfolk. The last of the five, the one at Norfolk, is doubtless the most formidable, being the United States steam frigate Merrimac, which has been so strengthened that, in the opinion of the rebels, it may be used as a RAM.

But we have not yet a single vessel at sea, nor, so far as I know, in course of construction, able to cope at all with a well built RAM.

If the Merrimac is permitted to escape from Elizabeth river, she will be almost certain to commit great depredations on our armed and unarmed vessels in Hampton Roads; and may even be expected to pass out under the guns of Fortress Monroe, and prey upon our commerce in Chesapeake Bay. Indeed, if the alterations have been skillfully made, and she succeeds in getting to sea, she will not only be a terrible scourge to our commerce, but may prove also to be a most dangerous visitor to our blockading squadrons off the harbors of the southern coasts.

I have attempted to call the attention of the Navy Department and the country so often to this subject during the last seven years, that I almost hesitate to allude to it again; and I would not do so here but that I think the danger from these tremendous engines *is very imminent but not at all appreciated.*

Experience derived from accidental collisions shows that a vessel struck in the waist by a steam ram, at sea, will go down almost instantaneously, and involve, as has often happened, the loss of nearly all on board.

"The Army of the Potomac."

Two months have passed since the publication of my little pamphlet on "The Army of the Potomac and its Mismanagement," in which I demonstrated, by facts within my own personal knowledge and experience, that General McClellan was unequal to the command of the great volunteer army then, as now, lying idle around this Capital. That pamphlet, calm in its tone, deliberate in its expressions and truthful in all its unanswerable facts, was made the object of numerous assaults and misrepresentations by those servile pens that have done most to render the country the victim of that very Military Incapacity against which I strove to shield it, and beneath which it is now fast crumbling away.

It is painful to ask the reader to look at the experience of those two brief, sad months; to note the precious season for action wasted; the contributions of a patriotic people squandered; our military pretensions made a by-word of reproach all over the earth; and our proud national flag, emblazoned by the grand and heroic founders of our Independence, lowered before a foreign menace.

But such, briefly told, are the results of our blind confidence, as exhibited in the two months last past. We will soon be able to compare them, here at Washington, where General McClellan commands in person, with those of the succeeding two—when, under the same military guidance, both our foreign and domestic relations will have been further developed.

CHARLES ELLET, Jr.

Georgetown, D. C., February 6, 1862.

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